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ABSTRACT

Findings are presented of an empirical study involving public, private, and parochial school systems' use of standardized test information by central office administrators. Examples of actual use are given, and descriptions of central office perspectives on standardized testing are detailed. Three categories were found to account for most of the criteria used in test selection: test content/design; information produced by the test and its potential use; and monetary and time costs. Test content/design was the most prevalent category. Overall, the frequently reported justifications for testing were individual student diagnosis and placement, program evaluation, and achievement measurement. Central office administrators were found to view testing as primarily serving student-oriented purposes. Generally, testing did not appear to be salient to central office administrators; rather, they viewed it as necessary to provide test information to those in the organization who used it at the individual student level. (Author/GK)

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STANDARDIZED TESTING IN THE EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION

ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE INFORMATION SYSTEM

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Accountability, truth in testing, competence-based curricula--these recent terms in the educational lexicon illustrate today's concern for evaluating performance in education organizations. But whose performance: student? teacher? administrator? textbook designer? test constructer? Recent debates over the nature of testing have not clarified the answer to that question primarily because the performance of any actor may be of interest to someone at some point. This paper attempts to address the question at a middle range level; its purpose is to set standardized educational testing within a context of administrative performance information. Thus it ignores such issues as the technical validity of tests, the psychological repercussions of test trauma, and the social implications of tracking based on tests. Instead, it argues that standardized educational tests produce only one form of information present and possibly used in school organization administrative performance information systems. It begins to specify the nature of such a system, assesses the role of test information within it, and speculates on possible functions and dysfunctions of such a system.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Administrative performance information is information collected by and for the administrative structure of an organization about the performance of various components of the organization. In the case of education organizations, this includes information collected by and for administrators about the performance of students, teachers, and administrators. At times this information may signal problematic situations within the organization and lead to changes in behavior. For example, it could lead to changes in personnel assignment and compensation, instructional activities, or organizational structure. At other times, it may simply function as a

monitoring device, to assure recipients that performance is generally adequate.

To the extent that collection, analysis, and use activities are predictable, repetitive, and related, they constitute an administrative performance information system. Three characteristics of such a system are notable: characteristics of the information collected; the intended users of the collected information; and the actual uses to which the information is put. Let us briefly review each of these three characteristics.

Information collected in an administrative performance information system varies on several dimensions. Indeed because the typical system includes multiple forms of information, many dimensional values are present in any system, even though some may predominate over others. Information comes from various sources. In the case of educational organizations, students, teachers, principals, and perhaps parents, comprise major sources. It is generated through various collection modes. These include personal observation, reports of observations made by others, and systematic, "objective" measuring instruments such as attendance records and standardized forms or tests. The timing of collection can vary, from frequent to infrequent, regular to irregular. The information concerns various subjects of performance. These may range from expenditures to attendance to learning to energy conservation. And the bandwidth of the information channels can range from very broad to very narrow. For example, it can range from a personal report of classroom observation complete with descriptions of the physical space, the kinds of instructional activities, and the apparent engagement of students, to a daily attendance report. The former represents a

much wider information channel than does the latter.

If the characteristics of the information can vary, so too can its users. An administrative performance information system can provide information for any member, client, or constituent of the organization. It is important to note that administrators themselves should not be considered the only potential users of information generated by this system. Their involvement may extend only to sponsoring the collection of information at the request of or to be used by others within or interested in the organization.

Probably the most commonly employed metaphor for the use of performance information in organizations comes from cybernetic theory. The metaphor suggests that when information indicates the organization is malperforming, corrective action is taken to bring organizational performance back into line. Thus the preeminent assumed use for performance information is to improve performance. This metaphor underlies common rationales for management information systems and management by objectives (Ackoff, 1967). It also underlies much of the current concern about the use of evaluation information in social programs (Suchman, 1967).

Casual application of a cybernetic metaphor to organizations ignores three important features of any true cybernetic system, however, and therefore leads to faulty assumptions about organization behavior implied by the metaphor. The first feature of a true cybernetic system is that if information reveals performance inadequacy, corrective strategies are automatically implied within that information. In the classic case, if a thermostat reading is too low or too high, the solution to that problem--turning a heater on or off--is automatically implied and carried out. This feature of cybernetic systems can

lead organizational analysts to assume that performance information in organizations always implies or carries with it corrective strategies. The second feature of a true cybernetic system is that it is a closed system, one in which the producer, collecter, and consumer of information are self-contained within a feedback loop. This feature can lead organizational analysts to assume a necessary similar connectedness within organizations, assuming that the producers and collectors of performance information should also be its consumers. The third feature of a true cybernetic system is that information use need not be equated with corrective action; information can also be used to indicate adequate performance. Again in the case of the thermostat, information indicating adequate temperatures is not ignored; it is registered as a sign of adequate performance. Too often analysts of organizations equate "use" with corrective action, assuming that if the latter is not occurring, neither is the former.

Limitations of a cybernetic metaphor in understanding the use of performance information in organizations highlight three propositions about any administrative performance information system.

1. Information use should not be equated only with corrective action.
2. Information users should not be equated only with information producers or collectors.
3. Information may or may not carry with it implicit strategies for corrective action.

Given these propositions we can detail three general uses of information in an administrative performance information system, building on the work of Simon (1971, 1973).

Information in an administrative performance information system can be used

to serve a scorecard function. (Note that, consonant with proposition one, this does not imply any corrective action.) It serves to let users know that things are more or less on course, often by incorporating implicit or explicit comparative standards. These standards may be historical, lending themselves to the construction of more or less systematic moving averages. Or they may be normative, lending themselves to cross sectional comparisons. Often this information is quantitative and, at the administrative level, appears in aggregate form. For example in police departments, monthly arrest or complaint investigation records are a form of aggregate performance information that serve a scorecard function, letting the commander know that things are pretty much on target. Score card information, whose collection is sponsored by administrators, can also be used by persons outside the formal administrative structure. If this information is disseminated to the outside world it may be labeled as "PR," "accountability information," or "federally-mandated evaluation results." In any case, it can serve to let its recipients know that things are more or less on target. The parent receiving a child's report card, the federal government receiving an evaluation report, or the stockholder receiving an annual report are all most likely to use that information in a scorecard manner. (Note that we are saying, consonant with proposition two, that the producers and collectors of information need not be its only users.)

Occasionally, however, information in the administrative performance information system signals a problematic situation. That is, the second way in which administrative performance information system information can be used is to direct attention. In effect it signals that tolerance levels have been breached and solution strategies should be sought. (Here, consonant with

proposition three, we note that attention directing information need not imply a specific solution strategy.) Once again, information may be used to direct attention by either those inside or those outside the actual administrative structure of the organization. If by the former, the result is often staff meetings, first to verify that a problem does in fact exist and second to explore ways to solve it (Mintzberg, 1973). If by the latter, the result is often further attention directing efforts designed to convince those within the organization that a problem does exist.

The third way in which administrative performance information system information can be used is actually to solve performance problems. Given the large volume of information flowing through an administrative performance information system, this probably turns out to be the least prevalent of the three classes of use. In order for information to be used in solving a performance problem, it must be relevant and appropriate (characteristics of the information) and in the hands of the problem solver (characteristics of the user).

This section has outlined some of the major general features of any administrative performance information system. In order to better specify their characteristics and functions, it is necessary to investigate empirically how various classes of information and users interact within real organizations.

Standardized tests are one component in the administrative performance information system of any educational organization--public or parochial district or private school. Through an exploratory field study we have begun to investigate the role of standardized tests and their general contribution

to the overall administrative performance information system in educational organizations. The following two sections of the paper describe the field study and the contribution of standardized tests to the school organization administrative performance information system.

FIELD STUDY DESIGN

The purpose of this study was to provide systematic descriptions of central office perspectives on standardized testing. Public (urban and suburban), parochial, and private school systems were investigated. Because this was an exploratory study, we did not sample randomly from the entire population of school organizations; rather, we simply solicited volunteer school organizations from all those operating within one large county in Western Pennsylvania. Data were collected during interviews with central office administrators having involvement with standardized testing in one urban district, one parochial system, eleven suburban districts, and five private schools. (Table 1 displays characteristics of the organizations in our study and compares them with the larger population.) In every case, the person in charge of testing within the organization was interviewed. Often, other central office personnel who have some contact with test scores were interviewed as well.

Data were collected by extensive, personal interviews. The interview schedule covered many aspects of testing programs such as purposes, organization, uses, and users. The questions were open-ended so that respondents could answer in their own words and not be constrained by predetermined categories. These answers comprise the bulk of our database.

Data analysis was undertaken with the primary goal of distilling as

accurate and full a picture as possible of testing as seen by central office administrators. We tallied every response to each question and developed groupings based on the responses, trying to preserve the spirit of the individual responses (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The groupings were then interpreted in terms of their frequency and their exhaustiveness. Four levels of analysis were used: the school system, the organization (school or district), the respondent, and the response. Most questions were analyzed only at the level most relevant to our objectives, and many questions only made sense at one particular level. For example, the presence or absence of a testing office was noted only at the organizational level; purposes were counted by the response. From these data we have attempted to describe standardized testing as our respondents see it, and then to compare and analyze the descriptions to better understand the role of testing in the central offices of school organizations.

STANDARDIZED TESTING IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Scope and Significance of Testing Programs

Every school organization in each school system supports a standardized testing program. Table 2 presents data on selected characteristics of testing programs in each system. Overall, the average number of standardized tests administered per school organization is five. The public--urban and suburban--systems employ more tests on average than do the private or parochial systems. However, the range in the number of tests used by suburban and private schools are identical; some suburban schools only use two standardized tests and some private schools use as many as nine.

The standardized tests used by schools fall into three main categories:

achievement tests, ability tests, and vocational aptitude tests. (We imply no ratification of a distinction between "ability" and "achievement" tests; this distinction comes from school administrators themselves.) Overall, achievement and ability tests were reported with almost equal frequency followed by vocational aptitude tests. All school organizations employ at least one achievement test: moreover, achievement tests outnumber any other kind of tests in the parochial and private systems. The urban district employs an equal number of achievement, vocational aptitude, and other tests while ability tests predominate in the suburban system. Interestingly, the public systems report using more different kinds of tests than the parochial or private systems and are the only systems to report using vocational aptitude tests.

School organizations administer standardized achievement tests during the fall, spring, both, or at mid-year. Spring is the most common time for achievement testing. Most private and suburban school organizations test in the spring. The urban district tests during both the spring and fall as does one suburban district. The parochial system and one private school test at mid-year.

When school organizations administer achievement tests, they may test every student or some subset, for example, students in every other grade. Most school organizations use achievement tests in the grades up to high school, with some testing through high school as well. The most prevalent testing pattern is to test every student starting in grade one or two through grade eight. Only one school organization gives achievement tests in every other grade.

The process by which a school organization selects a new test may reveal some general attitudes about the role of testing within the organization. Often a formal committee is established for this purpose; less frequently a group is called together to ratify the recommendations of someone who has researched a number of different tests. Overall, just slightly more organizations exclude teachers from their selection committees than include them. In none of the school organizations were test selection decisions made by a single administrator. In the urban and parochial systems, committees composed of central office administrators and pupil services personnel select new tests. In about half of the suburban and private school organizations, these committees also include faculty; in the school organizations that do not, test selection committees are similar to the urban and parochial committees.

Three categories were found to account for most of the criteria used in test selection: test content and design, information produced by the test and its potential use, and monetary and time costs. Test content and design, which includes curricular validity, was the most frequently mentioned category of test selection criteria in each system. This was the only category of criteria reported by the parochial respondents. In the other three systems, the next most frequently cited criterion was information produced by the test and its potential use within the organization. For example, this category includes statements such as "the kinds of reports the publisher provides." The least frequently mentioned criterion was monetary and time cost. For instance, "the test should be easy to administer" and "the length of the test" are statements about the time costs of tests. (These last two categories were mentioned with equal frequency in the urban system.) In general, test content

and design seems to be the most important and prevalent category of test selection criteria.

Indicators of the organizational status of testing programs within school systems are shown in Table 3. Most school organizations do not have a formal testing office. Only in the urban district and one private school were testing offices found. In school organizations without a testing office, responsibility for testing is usually assigned to a central office administrator. (An exception to this was found in one private school where testing was the responsibility of each teacher.) The school systems differ in terms of where they place responsibility for testing, but the level at which responsibility for testing is placed within the organization is fairly similar. In suburban school districts, testing was most often found under the direction of a pupil personnel administrator, and the next most frequent arrangement was the sharing of responsibility between a pupil personnel and another central office administrator. General administrators are given charge of testing less often than any other central office administrator in suburban school districts. Regardless of the functional area, the person in charge of testing is likely to be an assistant superintendent (or equivalent) and report directly to the superintendent. In the parochial system, the elementary testing program is the responsibility of an instructional administrator who reports to a general administrator, and at the secondary level a general administrator is in charge who reports to the superintendent. In four of the five private schools, testing is the responsibility of a general administrator such as the Director of the Middle School who then reports to another general administrator, the person in charge of the entire organization. In the urban system, the director of testing is a staff position and reports to an

instructional administrator. The urban district is the only school organization where this pattern of assignment of responsibility was found. In each system testing is located in a different functional area; however, the person in charge of testing usually reports to the person in charge of the entire organization. There is limited evidence to suggest that responsibility for testing resides at a "lower" level in the organizational hierarchy when there exists a formal testing office than when there does not.

The number of central office personnel who participate in testing programs also varies. The modal number of staff involved with testing for all systems is two. The public and parochial secondary school organizations have relatively fewer personnel involved compared to private and parochial elementary organizations.

When central office administrators are asked to justify the existence of their testing programs, they do so in similar ways across the different school systems. Note that these justifications may or may not have any connection with how test scores are actually used; these are normative statements.

Overall, the three most frequently reported justifications for testing were individual student diagnosis and placement, program evaluation, and achievement measurement. (See Table 4.) Two purposes were common to all systems: individual student diagnosis and placement and reporting to outside audiences. In the urban, parochial, and private school systems, student-oriented purposes outnumber program-oriented purposes. In the suburban system, these two categories of purposes are reported with equal frequency. Program monitoring was unique to the suburban system as was school admission to the private. Of program-oriented purposes, internal program

evaluation and program evaluation for outsiders were most common. Apparently, central office administrators view testing as serving student-oriented purposes primarily, and program-oriented purposes to a lesser extent.

The relative salience of standardized testing to central office administrators was estimated from several indicators. (See Table 5) As noted earlier, few school organizations have formal testing offices; furthermore, only three respondents thought their organizations could use a testing office. Excluding the urban system, testing occupies less than 10% of the time of whoever is in charge. It must compete for attention with a plethora of other responsibilities ranging from transportation to budget development. Also, testing expenditures are relatively small compared to other organizational expenditures, such as transportation or maintenance. In no district did they exceed five dollars per pupil. Furthermore, most respondents felt that their testing programs were adequately funded. Taking all these indicators into account, it seems plausible to assert that testing is not very salient to central office administrators.

Actual Use of Test Scores from a Central Office Perspective

Reports about who finds test information to be most useful also indicate that central office administrators believe most of the benefits of testing accrue to others, primarily building level actors. Table 6 shows that in all systems central office administrators named building level actors as those finding test information most useful. Only in the private system is the number of responses citing central office administrators close to that of building level actors. Among the building level actors, teachers are believed to find test information most useful; of central office administrators, it is those with instructional responsibilities, not those in pupil personnel as

might have been expected. Central office administrators view those actors who carry out student-oriented purposes (teachers, counselors, and principals) as the group who find test information most useful.

Another indicator of who central office administrators perceive as finding test information most salient is their report as to whom would miss testing the most if it were abolished. Overall, central office personnel believe building level personnel would miss testing the most if it were abolished. Of any single group of actors, teacners were thought to be those who would miss it most followed by students, parents, and the community. In the urban system, central office personnel as a group were mentioned more frequently than building level personnel, and general administrators and teachers were the most frequently reported actors. In the suburban system, building level personnel were reported most often as those who would miss testing the most; specifically, teachers and counselors account for almost half of the suburban responses. In the parochial system, instructional administrators and counselors were each mentioned once. In private schools, parents, students, and the community were most frequently cited as the actors who would miss testing the most if it were abolished. Teachers and general administrators were also mentioned by the private system respondents. These findings support the notion that central office administrators do not perceive themselves to be primary users of test information. From their vantage, the intensive use of test information occurs at the building level.

Central office administrators justifications for having a testing program and their beliefs about primary users of test information demonstrate that central office administrators do not view standardized test information as

very salient to their problems. Rather, they feel it is necessary and important to provide test information to others in the organization who tend to use test information at the individual student level. However, central office administrators do not ignore test information altogether.

Central office administrators were asked to report how they interpret test information, that is, the "rules of thumb" they use when reviewing a new set of test scores. The responses collected suggested three dimensions along which interpretation rules can be classified. The first is inter-time versus intra-time period measures; that is some respondents make explicit comparisons with scores from previous years, while others do not. The second is comparative versus non-comparative measures.[1] The third is, for those who do make comparisons, internal versus external reference groups.[2] For all systems, intra-time period measures are the most common and within this category non-comparative measures were the most frequently reported. (See Table 7.) Looking at the systems individually, it is interesting to note the most frequently reported interpretation measures for each system. In the urban district, comparison with an external reference group (national norms) is the most common interpretation rule. For the suburban and private systems, non-comparative measures predominate and for the parochial system only comparison with an internal reference group was reported.

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[1]Non-comparative measures are reflected in statements such as "I look at building averages" and "I look at classroom summaries." Administrators probably have an implicit reference group in mind when using these measures, however, they are not revealed in their reports.

[2]Internal reference groups are groups of students within the school organization such as grades, buildings, or subjects. The most common external reference group measures are national norms.

Occasionally test scores do stimulate action on the part of central office administrators. Respondents were asked to report what kinds of test scores would cause or have caused central office action. Overall, comparisons with external reference groups were cited most often as the category of measures that would lead to central office action and was the only category common to all systems in contrast to the data on test score interpretation. The most common use of test information by central office administrators is for curricular evaluation. In one district, scores on map reading in geography were low. Investigation suggested this was due to lack of emphasis on geographic terminology; so terminology was subsequently emphasized. In another district, all elementary students scored low on listening skills. The Assistant Superintendent of Instruction asked the principals to discuss the problem with their teachers and to propose solutions which resulted in some curricular changes. In a third district, fourth grade reading scores consistently lower than national norms caused administrators to devote more resources to fourth grade reading materials and in-service training. These examples are typical of the way test information is used by central office administrators with regard to educational programs. Test information does not usually define or specify a problem completely, but instead indicates the general area where a problem exists. Rarely is change made on the basis of test information alone; corroboration from some other source is usually sought. Nor do test scores automatically imply solutions; these must be found elsewhere. Often alternative sources hold information that is richer and more immediate for the central office administrator. As a result, the only exception we found to this condition occurred in the urban district where administrators decided that perhaps one reason scores were low was because

students did not know how to take tests. As a result, commercially prepared lesson plans on test taking were purchased for every elementary classroom in the district.

In summary, central office administrators believe that test information is most useful to building level actors for student-oriented purposes. Teachers, principals, and counselors are expected or assumed to find test information useful for individual student diagnosis and program placement and achievement measurement. For central office activities, test information seems to be perceived to be most relevant for curricular evaluation. Furthermore, at the central office level, test information is primarily used for scorecard purposes, such as for program monitoring and reporting to outside audiences. Test information is rarely a sole basis for making decisions. Often other sources and types of information seem to be more salient for central office problems and decision making.

Perhaps central office administrators' preference for information of a different nature than test information is best illustrated by looking at how these educational organizations evaluate their overall performance. Personal observation, teacher observation, parental and community feedback, and the achievements of students and graduates were all felt to be more indicative of overall organizational performance than were test scores. Yet, although test scores were reported as playing a minor, if any, role in overall organizational performance, they were the only type of information common to all of the organizations studied. The prevalence of test information in descriptions of the administrative performance information system may be due to the availability of test information in all educational organizations and

environmental influences such as external reporting requirements, rather than to their perceived utility to central office administrators.

DISCUSSION

The relatively low use of test information by central office administrators suggests that test information may not possess desirable qualities from the perspective of the central office. Two dimensions along which performance information can differ are immediacy and attachment. Immediacy is the state of being useful right away. Defining problems, proposing solutions, and timing are all avenues to immediacy. Attachment is association with a specific, identifiable person or group. Presentation and content contribute to the degree of attachment of information. Both of these concepts should be thought of as continua. What, if any, trade-off occurs between them is not known; however, it would seem reasonable that information relatively high on both dimensions would be preferred to that rated low on both. Most test information may be viewed by central office administrators as relatively low on both scales.

In contrast, personal observation, personal reports by faculty, staff, and students, and parental and community feedback would seem to be relatively high on immediacy and attachment. Personal contacts, especially complaints, often specify a problem and what should be done about it. Either of these alone carries more information that is immediately useful and salient to the central office administrator.

Item analysis, particularly when combined with test design, may alleviate some of the lack of immediacy of test information. Publishers are now able to supply clients with reports as to the level of mastery of specific skills and

concepts. In addition, they provide curriculum guides that contain ready remedies when test scores indicate low comprehension or mastery. In a sense, the test scores cross-index problems and solutions. This "system" may increase use of test information by central office administrators concerned with instructional strategies by increasing the immediacy of the information. This was not investigated during this project and is speculation; however, the two largest organizations have purchased or are contemplating the purchase of this type of testing program and service during the course of this project.

In summary, central office administrators do not view themselves as major users of test information. They believe test information is most useful to building level actors for whom they purchase the information. Occasionally central office administrators do use test information themselves. It is usually in connection with curricular evaluation and usually not the only information involved in the decision. Rather, a variety of other sources of information are drawn upon and this other information receives greater consideration particularly with regard to overall organizational performance assessment. This preference may be due to attributes of the information: the amount of immediacy and attachment they possess. This, however, awaits empirical investigation.

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Table 1

Representativeness of School Organizations in Field Study: Comparison with County, State and National Data*

	Urban	Suburban	Parochial	Private	Public Schools in Allegheny County	Public Schools in Pennsylvania	Public Schools in the U.S.	Non-Public Schools in the U.S.
Average Enrollment	48,795	4962	19,012	314	5528	4306	2738	276
% Minority	49.08	4.4	-	-	N.A.	-	14	-
Total Budget	$143,525,000	$11,477,258	-	-	$10,112,565	$7,207,295	$4,629,250	$518,880
Average Per Pupil Expenditure	$2941	$2309	-	-	$1833	$1852	$1638	$1880
Number of Schools in Organization	101	8	57	1	-	-	-	-

*Data for study participants are for the 1978-1979 school year. County, State and National data are for the 1976-1977 school year.

Table 2

Characteristics of Testing Programs

Testing Program Characteristics	School System Type				
	Urban	Suburban[a]	Parochial	Private	Total
Number of Standardized Tests					
Average Number of Tests	11	6	3	4	5
Range	-	2-9	-	2-9	2-11
General Content of Tests					
Achievement	3	20(35%)	3	11(52%)	37
Ability	2	25(43%)	-	8(38%)	35
Vocational	3	12(21%)	-	-	15
Other	3	1(2%)	-	2(10%)	6
Tests n =	11	58	3	21	93
Time at Which Achievement Tests Are Administered					
Fall and Spring	1(100%)	1(9%)	-	-	2(11%)
Fall	-	3(27%)	-	1(20%)	4(22%)
Spring	-	7(64%)	-	3(60%)	10(56%)
Mid-term	-	-	1(100%)	1(20%)	2(11%)
Organizations n =	1	11	1	5	18
Grade Levels at Which Achievement Tests Are Administered					
One or Two - Eight	1(100%)	9	1(100%)	3	14
Every Other Grade	-	1	-	-	1
				2N/A	
Organizations n =	1		1	5	

[a] Data are for ten of eleven districts.

Table 2 cont.

Test Selection Process	School System Type				
	Urban	Suburban	Parochial	Private	Total
Participants					
Single Administration	-	-	-	-	-
Committee of Administrators*	1(100%)	6(55%)	1(100%)	2(40%)	10(56%)
Committee of Administrators and Faculty	-	5(45%)	-	3(60%)	8(44%)
Organizations n =	1	11	1	5	18
Criteria					
Test Content and Design	2(50%)	31(46%)	2(100%)	10(59%)	45(49%)
Information Provided and its Potential Use	1(25%)	19(28%)	-	4(24%)	24(26%)
Costs (Monetary and Time)	1(25%)	16(24%)	-	2(12%)	19(21%)
Other	-	2(3%)	-	1(6%)	3(3%)
Responses n =	4	68	2	17	91

* Usually includes pupil services personnel.

Table 3

Organizational Status of Testing Programs

Status Indicators	School System Type				
	Urban	Suburban	Parochial	Private	Total
Formal Testing Office	1(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	1(20%)	2(11%)
Position Responsible					
General Administrator	-	1(11%)	secondary (50%)	4(80%)	5.5(31%)
Instructional Administrator	-	2(22%)	elementary (50%)	-	2.5(14%)
Pupil Personnel Administrator	-	5(56%)	-	-	5(28%)
Pupil Personnel Adm. with Instr. Adm. on Gen. Adm.	-	3(33%)	-	-	3(17%)
Other	1(100%)	-	-	1(20%)	2(11%)
Director of Testing Reports to:					
Superintendent		9(82%)	secondary (50%)	-	9.5(53%)
General Administrator	--	1(9%)	elementary (50%)	5(100%)	6.5(36%)
Instructional Administrator	1(100%)	-	-	-	1(6%)
Pupil Personnel Administrator	-	1(9%)	-	-	1(6%)
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Number of Personnel Involved with Testing					
1	1(100%)	1(11%)	secondary (50%)	-	2.5(14%)
2	-	5(56%)	-	1(20%)	6(33%)
3	-	3(33%)	-	1(20%)	4(22%)
4	-	1(11%)	-	1(20%)	2(11%)
5 & up	-	1(11%)	elementary (50%)	2(40%)	3.5(19%)
organizations n =	1	11	1*	5	18

* The parochial system is considered one organization. Each educational division (elementary or secondary) is counted as one-half.

Table 4

Purposes of or Justifications for Standardized Testing as Reported by Central Office Administrators
(Multiple responses possible)

Orientation	School System Type				
	Urban	Suburban	Parochial	Private	Total
Student Oriented					
Admissions				3(25%)	3(3%)
Diagnosis & Placement	7(29%)	18(29%)	2(40%)	3(25%)	30(29%)
Ability Measurement	6(25%)		1(20%)	2(17%)	9(9%)
Achievement Measurement	7(29%)	10(16%)		1(8%)	18(17%)
Provide Scores to Principals or Teachers		3(5%)	1(20%)		4(4%)
Program Oriented					
Instructional Program Monitoring		4(6%)			4(4%)
Instructional Program Evaluation		18(29%)		2(17%)	20(19%)
Reporting to Outside Audiences	1(4%)	9(14%)	1(20%)	1(8%)	12(12%)
Teacher Evaluation	3(13%)	1(2%)			4(4%)
responses n =	24	63	5	23	104

Table 5

Indicators of Relative Salience of Standardized Testing to Central Office Administrators

Salience Indicators	School System Type				
	Urban	Suburban	Parochial	Private	Total Sample
Presence of Testing Office? (By Organization)	1(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	1(20%)	2(11%)
Should there be one? (By respondent)	-	2(6%)	0(0%)	1(77%)	3(5%)
Amount of Time spent on Testing by "Person in Charge of Testing"[a] (By respondent)	100%	10%	10%	5%	-
Approximate Per Pupil Testing Expenditure (By district)	$3.75	$1.96[b]	$4.25	$2.80	-
Is Testing Adequately Funded? (By Respondent)	16(84%)	28(90%)	1(50%)	5(83%)	50(86%)
Organization n =	1	11	1	5	18
Respondent n =	19	31	2	6	58

[a]Figure represents the amount of time spent by the modal "director of testing."

[b]Figure reported is the average based on data for six districts. Other suburban districts were unable to supply figures.

Table 6

Salience of Test Information to Various Actors as Perceived by COAs
(Multiple responses possible)

Salience Indicator	School System Type				
	Urban	Suburban	Parochial	Private	Total
Who finds it Most Useful?					
Central Office					
Superintendent	-	1(4%)	-	-	1(2%)
General Administrator	-	4(16%)	-	3(38%)	7(14%)
Instructional Administrator	3(19%)	4(16%)	1(50%)	-	8(16%)
Pupil Personnel Administrator	-	1(4%)	-	-	1(2%)
Buildings					
Principals	2(13%)	6(24%)	-	-	8(16%)
Teachers	9(56%)	7(28%)	1(50%)	3(38%)	20(41%)
Counselors	1(6%)	2(8%)	-	2(25%)	5(10%)
Other	1(6%)	1(4%)	-	-	2(4%)
responses n =	16	25	2	8	51
Who Would Miss Testing the Most If It Were Abolished?					
Central Office					
Board	1(4%)	3(7%)	-	-	4(5%)
Superintendent	-	1(3%)	-	-	1(1%)
General Administrator	6(21%)	3(7%)	-	1(20%)	10(13%)
Instructional Administrator	2(7%)	3(7%)	1(50%)	-	6(8%)
Pupil Personnel Administrator	-	-	-	-	0(0%)
Building					
Principals	1(4%)	-	-	-	1(1%)
Teachers	8(29%)	11(29%)	-	1(20%)	20(27%)
Counselors	2(7%)	8(20%)	1(50%)	-	11(15%)
Special Education and Itinerant Staff	1(4%)	3(7%)	-	-	4(5%)
Parents, students, & community	4(14%)	6(15%)	-	3(60%)	13(17%)
Other	3(11%)	2(5%)	-	-	5(7%)
responses n =	28	40	2	5	75

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Table 7

Information Processing Behaviors Employed by Central Office Administrators in Viewing Test Scores

Behaviors	School System Type				
	Urban	Suburban	Parochial	Private	Total
Interpretation Rules					
Intra time period					
Internal Reference Group	1(10%)	5(9%)	1(100%)	3(19%)	10(12%)
External Reference Group	6(60%)	6(11%)	-	1(6%)	13(16%)
Non-comparative	-	35(65%)	-	7(44%)	42(52%)
Inter time Period					
Internal Reference Group	3(30%)	8(15%)	-	1(6%)	12(15%)
Other (Combination of above)	-	-	-	4(25%)	4(5%)
responses n =	10	54	1	16	81
What kinds of Scores Would Cause Central Office Action?					
Deviation from expectations derived from:					
Intra time period					
Internal Reference Group	-	6(32%)	-	4(44%)	10(26%)
External Reference Group	8(100%)	6(32%)	1(50%)	1(11%)	16(42%)
Non-comparative	-	1(5%)	1(50%)	3(33%)	5(13%)
Inter time period					
Internal Reference Group	-	2(11%)	-	-	2(5%)
Other (Combination of above)	-	4(21%)	-	1(11%)	5(13%)
responses n =	8	19	2	9	38